**New Literacies**

The world we live in today is an ever changing society. It seems to be changing faster and faster over time. It is hard to keep up with this rapid pace. The one area that is especially hard to keep up with is technology. Once the “new thing” comes into style, just as quickly it is out and something else has taken its place. As a student studying to become a teacher, I have had a wakeup call in regard to new literacies. Coming into this semester I had no idea what “new, digital literacies” were. It is amazing what a couple months and a professional teacher can do.

I always thought that literacy meant being able to read and write. While those things are true and important to digital literacy, in order to be fully digitally literate one has to understand how many kinds of information are processed, delivered and received in a world that is filled with an abundant amount to technological devices and programs. Why is this important? It is of great importance because “digital media is more relevant to students than traditional media” (Kajder, 9). In order to teach and to connect to today’s student, new, digital literacies need to be a part of the classroom.

Throughout this semester I have been exposed to many ways in how to process and publish all kinds of work. New technologies have opened up many doors, or should I say “windows” or “clouds,” in how I can communicate as a teacher. I participated in four digital literacy projects this semester: thematic braiding, character sketch journal, digital poetry, and public service announcement. The books that were used during class to inspire those projects are: *Smile* by Raina Tegelmeir, *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, *Dead End in Norvelt* by Jack Gantos, and *Starters* by Lissa Price. These projects each used different digital tools and programs that I had no idea existed in January. As I was exposed to these tools my confidence in my own digital literacy increased. Through modeling from Dr. Wright, I learned it is best to teach new technology using the scaffolding method, start easy and gradually get harder, and then the students will succeed. I repeated some of these projects from class using the book *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green and posted them to my Wiki page, that I learned how to create, as my final project.

The first project I did was thematic braiding. In class I used the graphic novel *Smile*, by Raina Tegelmeir. For the project I "braided” text, images, quotes, themes and connections together to come up with my presentation. The programs used were Flickr Creative Commons and Google Documents. This was my first experience with a graphic novel. I learned that by using graphic novels, a teacher can encourage the reluctant reader. “Graphic novels can also help improve language and literacy development, including second language learners; the illustrations provide valuable contextual clues to the meaning of the written narrative” (Crawford, 2004). Graphic novels and thematic braiding’s worked well together because both incorporated working with text and image at the same time. In my future classroom I will be sure to include graphic novels. I then did the same thematic braiding project for my Wiki page using the book The *Fault in Our Stars*. Two Wisconsin common core standards that thematic braiding meet are: RL 5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text and RL 5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

The second project I did was a character sketch journal. This project was a multimodal response to the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. I had to choose a character and write journal entries through the characters eyes and based on the events in the novel. These journal entries then became my script and I created five journal narratives recording my voice. The programs I used to create this project were Voice Thread and Flickr Creative Commons. This character sketch journal allowed for expression of the voice and feeling come alive. I enjoyed this project because there was a lot of creative freedom in choosing what to write about. At the same time I had to stay true to the evidence in the book. Two Wisconsin common core standards that a character sketch journal meet are: RL 6.3-Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution and RL 6.5-Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

The third project I did on was digital poetry. I used the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, again. “Poetry is the fusion of three arts: music, storytelling, and painting” (Hughs, 20). This quote rings true to me because poetry should paint a picture and move at the same time. The reader should hear and feel like they are at the time and place of the poem. For this project I had to construct text, a poem based from a theme or event from the book. Then I had to add image, narration, sound or video to make it come alive digitally. I created my digital poem using Microsoft Power Point. Digital poetry was my favorite project because I enjoy writing poetry. I had never added image and music to my poetry before. By turning my poem into a digital poem, I made it come alive and I feel it was more powerful then just being printed on a piece of paper. I got to share a part of myself with my peers that I was proud of. I then did the same digital poetry project for my Wiki page using the book The *Fault in Our Stars*. Two Wisconsin common Core Standards digital poetry covered are: RL.6‐8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed and RL6‐8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

The fourth and final project I did was a public service announcement. For this project I used the book *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green and posted it to my Wiki page. This was a multimodal response to my novel. I was to think of the main message or theme within the novel and then create that message into a public service announcement. I had to think of whom audience was and use persuasive writing in creating my script. I created my public service announcement using WeMovie, iMesh Music, WingClips and Flickr Creative Commons. I used music, images, voice overs, and videos for my project. This was by far the most challenging project because of the use of so many digital tools. I struggled with my lack of patience but in the end I was happy with how my public service announcement turned out. Two Wisconsin common core standards the public service announcement fulfilled are: [RL.6.2,](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/6/2/) Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments and RL. [6-8.8](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/6-8/8/), Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

“More powerful than a room full of gadgets is a teacher who has a deep understanding of what the new forms of reading and writing entail” (Kist, 2013). The way in which literature is taught to adolescents has changed. Technology gets today’s student excited and active in their learning. New literacies can and should be integrated into lessons. Digital responses to literature projects do meet the common core state standards. The understanding I have gained about new literacies is going to make me a great teacher. I will be able to engage the students and help them invest in their future. The world is changing into a digital environment and students should learn the tools they will need to survive and succeed. Having a new energy and many new tools and project ideas to teach adolescent literature, I cannot wait to get into a classroom and use them.

Bibliography

Crawford, Philip. (2004, February.) *Using Graphic Novels to Attract Reluctant Readers.* Retrieved April 15, 2013 from [http://www.ecu.edu/cs- lib/trc/upload/LMC\_Feb04\_Crawford.pdf](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-%09lib/trc/upload/LMC_Feb04_Crawford.pdf)

Gantos, Jack. (2011). *Dead End in Norvelt*. D&M Publishers Inc.:Canada

Green, John. (2012). *The Fault in Our Stars*. Penguin Group Inc. New York, NY

Hughs, Jeanette and Amy John. (2009). From Page to Digital Stage: Creating Digital Performances of Poetry. *Voices from the Middle,* 16(3),15-22.

Kajder, Sara. (2010.) *Adolescents and Digital Literacies.* National Council of Teachers of English: Urbana, IL.

Kist, William. (2013, March). *New Literacies and the Common Core.* ASCD. Retrieved April 25, 2013 from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar13/vol70/num06/New-Literacies-and-the-Common-Core.aspx>

Palacio, R.J. (2012).*Wonder*. Random House Children’s Books: New York, NY.

Price, Lissa. (2012). *Starters.* Random House, Inc.: New York, NY.

Tegelmeier, Raina. (2010). *Smile.* Scholastic, Inc.: New York, NY.